

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, KS, US

SUBJECT: ROK CRITICISM OF US ACTIONS

REF: STATE 210842

1. SUMMARY: US DISSATISFACTION WITH KOREAN PRESS CRITICISM OF US ACTIONS TRANSMITTED TO TOP PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER KIM. KIM RESPONDED POSITIVELY, STATING THAT HE WOULD BRING APPROACH TO PARK IMMEDIATELY AND WAS CERTAIN PARK WOULD TAKE DIRECT STEPS TO QUIET CRITICISM. END SUMMARY.

2. IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIPT REFTEL, I GOT IN TOUCH WITH PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARY GENERAL KIM CHUNG YUM, WHOM I HAVE USED SUCCESSFULLY IN THE PAST TO BRING MESSAGES OF HIGHEST IMPORTANCE QUICKLY TO PRESIDENT PARK. I SAW KIM SHORTLY THEREAFTER AND MADE CLEAR THAT I WAS PREPARED TO SEE PRESIDENT PARK SHOULD HE QUESTION VIEWS I WAS TRANSMITTING FROM HIGHEST LEVELS US GOVERNMENT.

3. I THEN EXPRESSED IN CLEAR CUT AND FIRM TERMS OUR DISSATISFACTION WITH CRITICISM AS SET FORTH REFTEL. IN ADDITION TO POINTS MADE REFTEL, I POINTED OUT THAT WE HAD NOT REPEAT NOT LIMITED OURSELVES TO PROTEST (AS IMPLIED IN PARK LETTER SEOUL'S 6623) BUT HAD CLEARLY ACCEPTED SERIOUS RISKS INVOLVED IN TREE-CUTTING OPERATION, A FACT THAT SEEMED TO BE INSUFFICIENTLY APPRECIATED BY KOREAN PRESS AND OTHERS. I ADDED FURTHER COMPLAINT, ON BASIS INFORMATION WHICH HAD COME TO ME
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THIS MORNING, THAT KOREAN OFFICIALS ARE BRIEFING PRESS ALONG

SIMILAR LINES CRITICAL OF OUR ACTIONS AS NOT GOING FAR ENOUGH. I THEN REVIEWED PARK'S EARLIER ADVICE TO US, CITING BOTH PREVIOUS MEETINGS, FIRST WITH GENERAL STILWELL AND THEN WITH CHARGE STERN AND STILWELL, AS WELL AS MY MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER AUGUST 22. I STRESSED THAT IN FACT WE HAD FOLLOWED ROK ADVICE EXACTLY AND THERE WERE NO GROUNDS FOR CRITICISM IN PRESS AND ELSEWHERE.

4. I ENDED UP AS SET FORTH PARA 4 REFTTEL, EXPECTING GOVERNMENT ACTION TO BRING ABOUT MORE FAVORABLE REACTION TO OUR POSITION.

5. I ALSO POINTED OUT TO KIM BROAD SUPPORT ENGENDERED IN U.S. FOR POSTURE AND ACTIONS USG HAS TAKEN, GIVING HIM NUMBER OF QUOTATIONS FROM U.S. PRESS COMMENT AS WELL AS STATEMENT ISSUED BY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE CARTER. RESULT OF USG ACTIONS HAS THEREFORE BEEN MUCH BROADER SUPPORT FOR U.S. POSITION IN KOREA THAN HAS BEEN CASE IN MANY MONTHS WHICH SHOULD BE SOURCE OF SIGNIFICANT GRATIFICATION FOR ROK AND FURTHER REASON FOR NOT DENIGRATING OUR DECISION.

6. KIM FULLY RECOGNIZED SERIOUSNESS OF OUR APPROACH. HE SAID THAT PRESIDENT PARK IN SERIES OF THREE NATIONAL SECURITY MEETINGS HAD IN FACT EMPHASIZED TO ALL SENIOR OFFICIALS PRESENT THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL NOT ONLY TO COORDINATE CLOSELY WITH USG BUT TO STICK TO AND STAND BY POSITION TAKEN BY U.S. IN PRESIDENT PARK'S VIEW, UNITY BETWEEN U.S. AND ROK IS MOST IMPORTANT LESSON TO TEACH KIM IL SUNG. PARK TOLD HIS SENIOR OFFICIALS THAT, WHILE THEY MIGHT EXPRESS TO US VIEWS AND DIFFERENCES PRIVATELY, THEY MUST ACCEPT U.S. POSITION AND SUPPORT IT PUBLICLY. FURTHERMORE, PARK DIRECTED THAT PRESS COMMENT AND DEMONSTRATIONS SHOULD NOT REPEAT NOT GO TOO FAR, BECAUSE IF KOREAN PUBLIC BECAME OVEREXCITED, THEN LATER IT WOULD BE UNHAPPY WITH U.S. AND ROK ACTIONS.

7. KIM MADE SEVERAL OTHER COMMENTS OF SOME INTEREST. FIRST, THAT ROKG EXPECTED NORTH KOREANS TO REACT TO TREE-CUTTING WITH SOME FORM OF LOCAL RESISTANCE WITHIN JSA, INCLUDING PHYSICAL ACTION AND PERHAPS FIRING OF WEAPONS, BUT REACTING SHORT OF FULL-SCALE WAR. HOWEVER, AS A RESULT U.S. DETERMINATION AND MILITARY PREPAREDNESS, NORTH KOREANS WERE AFRAID TO REACT. CONFIDENTIAL

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SECONDLY, HE CONFIRMED THAT PARK AT NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING SUNDAY HAD INSTRUCTED THAT THE INCIDENT BE CLOSED NOT MILITARILY, BUT SETTLED DIPLOMATICALLY.

8. KIM SAID THAT HE WOULD BRING OUR APPROACH TO PRESIDENT PARK'S IMMEDIATE ATTENTION. HE WAS CERTAIN THAT PRESIDENT PARK WOULD AGAIN DIRECT THAT STEPS BE TAKEN TO CALM DOWN EXCITEMENT AND QUIET CRITICISM OF U.S. HE SUGGESTED THAT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL,

IN TERMS KOREAN PUBLIC, TO GIVE MORE DETAILS AUGUST 21 TREE-CUTTING OPERATION. THESE DETAILS WOULD MAKE KOREAN PUBLIC UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AND RISKS INVOLVED IN THIS OPERATION AND WOULD SATISFY THEIR DESIRE FOR FIRM ACTION AGAINST NORTH KOREANS. I SAID I WOULD PASS ON THIS SUGGESTION.

COMMENT: I EXPECT THAT FIRM MESSAGE GIVEN TO KIM SHOULD HAVE DESIRED EFFECT, ALTHOUGH PERHAPS NOT OBTAINING ABSOLUTELY ALL CRITICISM WHICH, EVEN WITH ROK CONTROL OF PRESS, IS DIFFICULT TO ACCOMPLISH. I PLAN TO KEEP VERY CLOSE WATCH ON PRESS CRITICISM AND GO TO MAT WITH KIM AND, IF NECESSARY, WITH PRESIDENT PARK SHOULD THERE BE NO SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN PRESS COMMENTS ABOUT OUR ACTIONS.

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